

# HORIPSEMA "HELEN" MENESHIAN: A SURVIVOR'S STORY

**HON. ADAM B. SCHIFF**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 29, 2010

Mr. SCHIFF. Madam Speaker, I rise today to memorialize and record a courageous story of survival of the Armenian Genocide. The Armenian Genocide, perpetrated by the Ottoman Empire from 1915 to 1923, resulted in the death of 1.5 million Armenian men, women, and children. As the U.S. Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire Henry Morgenthau documented at the time, it was a campaign of "race extermination."

The campaign to annihilate the Armenian people failed, as illustrated by the proud Armenian nation and prosperous diaspora. It is difficult if not impossible to find an Armenian family not touched by the genocide, and while there are some survivors still with us, it is imperative that we record their stories. Through the Armenian Genocide Congressional Record Project, I hope to document the harrowing stories of the survivors in an effort to preserve their accounts and to help educate the Members of Congress now and in the future of the necessity of recognizing the Armenian Genocide.

This is one of those stories (submitted by Shirley Collins):

My name is Shirley Kalashian-Collins. I was born in 1951 to Armenian parents. My mother was born in Aintab, Turkey, in 1920 in the midst of the genocide of Armenians. My mother and my grandparents narrowly made it out alive and found refuge in the U.S. My paternal grandmother also had a harrowing story. Due to the threat against the Armenians she was shipped to the U.S. at 15 years old to marry an Armenian, only to find out a few years later that her parents were killed and her younger sisters kidnapped. My mother tried hard to put all these stories down on paper so the world would know what happened to our families. After she passed away, I attempted to finish her project. After nearly 10 years and hundreds of hours of work, I put the story together.

Now I want to thank our Rep. Adam Schiff for his efforts to put these stories that are left untold in the Congressional Record. I know my mother, if she were alive, would be dancing up and down with joy. You can't imagine how exciting this is for me after all the years of work to make sure these stories are kept alive and heard so that history will be recorded accurately. Thank you Rep. Schiff. This is such a wonderful and amazing idea.

This is the story of my Grandmother, Horipsema "Helen" Meneshian, as told by my mother, Azadohi Kalashian:

My mother was a remarkable woman. She was born in Aintab in 1895. She was the only daughter of five children born to Soghmon and Khanoom Meneshian.

In 1914 she married Armen Guleserian. They had a big and fashionable wedding party that lasted for three days. Their first child was a beautiful and bright little girl who gave them much joy. This child was not quite two years old when the Turkish government sent orders to have the Turkish army go around and evacuate everyone in Aintab from their homes.

Only whatever could be placed on a donkey's back was allowed to be removed from the house. Then the Turkish soldiers sealed

all the doors, windows and locks of our house. We were all ordered to march in the direction of the Syrian Desert.

My mother's trousseau of finest lace, satin and silk was not meant to be enjoyed by her. One by one, each article was sold for the price of something to eat. Her gold coins, chains and rings also went the same way. Eventually, hunger became unbearable, and death took its grim toll. One by one, God called their first born, then their second born, then their third born to be by HIS side. They were never to feel hunger again!

Armen had been sent off to the military and Hripsema had been left alone in Damascus. She tried to reach her father but they would not let her travel because she was Armenian. So, she found someone to travel with to go to Hama where her relative, Kevork, was. In an interview with daughter, Azad, in 1979 she says:

Everybody got off when we were near Hama. I was the only one left. They gave me to a woman who had donkeys and this woman took me to Hama on a donkey. We had nothing. I had the child in my arms and the child's necessities tied on my back. We came by a cemetery and the woman said, "I will not go in here." She took me off of the donkey. She said, "I will be afraid to be in a cemetery. You do whatever you will."

I went in by myself, I found a shop. I asked the man in the shop, "There is the Baronian family living here, do you know them?" He said, "Yes, they went to Aleppo." I said, "There is Kevork Guleserian here." He said, "Yes, they are here but their place is very far." Then they locked the door.

The child wanted some water, I gave him some water and I went and sat by the store. And it got dark, it was evening. Then I saw my father-in-law's grandson, he later said that he would never walk the way I was sitting at, he would always go the other way. I lifted my head and saw him. I was looking for them. He got very surprised and asked what happened and I told him everything. He took me, the child was in my arms, he took the load I was carrying and took me to their home.

He knocked on the door; they opened the door, a month, or a month and a half. Papa's brother's wife was there. She was Guleserian as well. In about a month the child who was in my arms died. I was devastated. Then papa came and asked, "Where is the boy?" I said, "May your soul live, you'll have another one." He was such a nice boy. They had asked to have him, "Give him to us, we'll raise him up" in Damascus. I would not. How can you give your own child?

## OUR UNCONSCIONABLE NATIONAL DEBT

**HON. MIKE COFFMAN**

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 29, 2010

Mr. COFFMAN. Madam Speaker, today our national debt is \$13,472,761,083,757.88.

On January 6th, 2009, the start of the 111th Congress, the national debt was \$10,638,425,746,293.80.

This means the national debt has increased by \$2,834,335,337,464.00 so far this Congress.

This debt and its interest payments we are passing to our children and all future Americans.

# ACCOUNTABILITY FOR DEFENSE CONTRACTORS' ACT

**HON. EARL BLUMENAUER**

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 29, 2010

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Madam Speaker, since July, I have been working with 26 Oregon National Guard members who have filed a lawsuit against the defense contractor KBR for exposing them to the potent carcinogen, hexavalent chromium. These veterans have a compelling case for contractor negligence that resulted in their poisoning.

As the legal proceedings have unfolded, KBR has revealed the existence of a still-classified contract clause that could shift the cost of all damages and court fees onto the Department of Defense—and by extension the U.S. taxpayers.

Today I am introducing legislation, along with Representative SCHRADER, who has been a strong ally to these veterans, and Representative WALTER JONES, a leader on the House Armed Services Committee, to end the contracting practices that shield companies from their own reckless behavior and that remove incentives for contractors to operate responsibly.

This legislation will set important and long-overdue limits to indemnification agreements and will introduce much-needed congressional oversight of the defense contracting process.

Senators WYDEN and MERKLEY are introducing a version of this bill in the Senate, and I hope that our colleagues on both sides of the aisle and in both chambers will act swiftly to enact this legislation before the end of the session.

## TRIBUTE TO LIEUTENANT COLONEL FRANCIS J. CURTIS

**HON. STEVE KAGEN**

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 29, 2010

Mr. KAGEN. Madam Speaker, I rise here today to pay tribute to Lieutenant Colonel Francis J. Curtis as he relinquishes command of the 432nd Civil Affairs Battalion in Green Bay, Wisconsin.

Lt. Col. Curtis assumed command of the 432nd Civil Affairs Battalion in October 2007. He has served in key positions as a U.S. Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command (Airborne) officer, with a special focus on the conflict in Iraq. Under Lt. Col. Curtis's command, his battalion was deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom from late 2007 through late 2008. Prior to his deployment with the 432nd, he also served in Iraq from March 2003 through April 2004.

During his 24 years of exceptional service to this country in the United States Army Reserve, Lt. Col. Curtis has been awarded the Bronze Star Medal (3rd Award), Purple Heart, Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal (6th Award), Army Achievement Medal (3rd Award), Army Reserve Components Achievement Medal (31st Award), National Defense Service Medal (2nd Award), Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, Iraq Campaign Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Armed Forces Reserve